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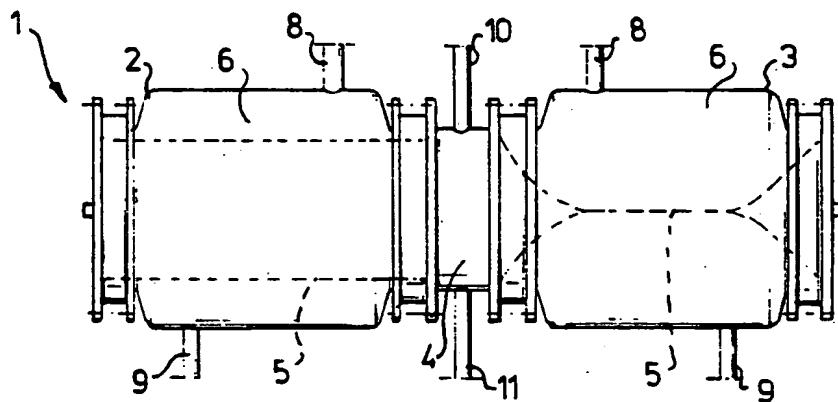


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(54) Title: REACTOR SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

A reactor system suitable in particular for a model of a gastrointestinal tract comprises one or more units (1), each consisting of two or more pressure chambers (2, 3) and in each of said pressure chambers a hose (5) made of flexible material and open at both ends, which hoses are fixed with their ends sealed in such a way that the spaces (6) between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses are closed. Connection means (8, 9) are also present for supplying a gas or liquid to and discharging it from the spaces (6) between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses, and coupling means are present for coupling the pressure chambers to each other and/or to end pieces or intermediate pieces (4). Finally, connection means (10, 11) are present in the end pieces or intermediate pieces for supplying constituents to and discharging them from the hoses.

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## Title: Reactor system

The invention relates to a reactor system.

Reactor systems often consist of a pot or tank in which a stirring element is disposed. The digestion process in the 5 gastrointestinal tract, for example, can be simulated only very imperfectly with such a system. In particular, the peristaltic movements which contribute to the homogenization and transfer of substances are absent.

10 The object of the invention is to provide a peristaltically mixing reactor system in which in particular highly viscous liquids can be mixed and homogenized, and which system is suitable in particular for assembling a model for a gastrointestinal tract.

According to the invention, the reactor system comprises for this purpose:

- 15 at least one unit consisting of two or more pressure chambers; in each of the pressure chambers a hose made of flexible material and open at both ends, which hoses are fixed with their ends sealed in such a way that the spaces between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses are closed;
- 20 connection means for supplying a gas or liquid to and discharging it from the spaces between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses; coupling means for coupling the pressure chambers to each other and/or to end pieces or intermediate pieces; connection means in the end pieces or intermediate pieces for supplying 25 constituents to and discharging them from the hoses.

The medium in the spaces between the wall of a pressure chambers and a hose can also be used for heating of the constituents taking part in the reaction.

In order to be able to control both the frequency and the force 30 of the peristaltic movements accurately, control means can be used to raise and lower the pressure in the closed spaces between a pressure chambers wall and a hose. These control means will usually consist of computer-controlled pumps.

The volume of the reactor system can be adapted to 35 requirements, through the fact that the number of pressure chambers per unit and the number of units can be varied. The system is preferably modular, i.e. the supply of constituents to and discharge thereof from the system can be handled by means of standardized end pieces and

intermediate pieces and the system can be expanded in a simple way, inter alia by means of a peristaltic flap valve pump based on the principle of the invention.

It is pointed out that Abstract 5592130 from Japanese Patent Application 55-2924 discloses a mixer consisting of two bags connected to each other by means of an intermediate piece with channels recessed therein. This intermediate piece also comprises supply and discharge pipes. The mixing is effected by reducing and increasing the volume of the bags alternately, in the course of which the contents are constantly moved from one bag to the other and back. There is no question in this case of pressure chambers in which hoses made of flexible material and open at both ends are fitted, so that any desired number of pressure chambers cannot be connected to each other or to intermediate or end pieces either. This known mixer is therefore not suitable for forming a reactor system which through its modular construction can be extended as desired.

In the case of several reactor units, in successive units the discharge pipe for mixed constituents of the first unit can be connected to the supply pipe for constituents for mixing in a second unit, and computer-controlled valves can be fitted in the combined discharge and supply pipes.

With such a reactor system, an in vitro model of the gastrointestinal tract with a high degree of correspondence to the in vivo situation can be constructed. Particles can be pulverized through powerful contractions. The mechanical cleansing effect in the small intestine, which is essential for preventing excessive microbiological growth, can be simulated extremely well with the reactor. It is possible to work with highly viscous liquids such as culture media, the gastrointestinal contents from a regular meal, or the contents of the large intestine. The absence of projecting parts such as stirrers and the presence of a flexible wall greatly reduce the growth of organisms. Friction-sensitive cells can be grown by selecting gentle contractions.

The flexible hoses are preferably made of silicone rubber.

The exchange of nutrients, production and waste products, liquids and gases can be achieved through the use of semi-permeable hoses. This also applies if at least one unit is connected to a device for the exchange of low-molecular components, which device is in particular provided with hollow membrane fibres.

A flexible inner tube can also be fitted in the hose of at

least one pressure chamber. Liquid supplied to said flexible tube can exchange substances with dialysis liquid in a space between the hose and the flexible tube.

The contents of the mixing reactor can be brought to any 5 desired temperature (for example to 37°C) if the reactor is provided with means for heating the liquid or gaseous medium which can be conveyed to the spaces between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses.

Moreover, the reactor system according to the invention is suitable not only for an in vitro model of the gastrointestinal tract, 10 but the reactor according to the invention can also be used for the production of polymers, high-density cultures, slurry fermentations and mould fermentations. In general, the reactor system will be of interest for the food industry, the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry, and in laboratories and education.

15 One or more pH electrodes will often be placed in the reactor, thus permitting a computer-controlled physiological pH development of the reactor contents. The gradual emptying of the stomach can also be simulated.

20 The reactor system according to the invention is extremely well suited for complete computer control.

The principle of the invention can also advantageously be used on a peristaltic flap valve pump which is characterized by three or more pressure chambers, each with a flexible hose fixed therein in such a way that the space between the pressure chamber wall and the hose is closed 25 and the hoses are connected to each other, inlet and outlet means for a gas or liquid opening out into each of the closed spaces between a pressure chamber wall and a hose, and control means for controlling the supply of a gas or liquid to and the discharge thereof from the closed spaces between a pressure chamber wall and a hose.

30 The invention will now be explained in greater detail with reference to the figures.

Figure 1 shows diagrammatically a reactor system according to the invention.

Figure 2 shows a longitudinal section of a possible 35 constructional embodiment.

Figure 3 shows diagrammatically a more extended version of a reactor system according to the invention.

Figure 4 shows a computer-controlled in vitro stomach model using the reactor system according to the invention.

The reactor system shown diagrammatically in Figure 1 contains a unit 1 consisting of two cylindrical pressure chambers 2 and 3 which are interconnected by means of a cylindrical intermediate piece 4. A hose 5, consisting of, for example, silicone rubber, is fixed in each of the 5 pressure chambers. Situated between the hoses 5 and the walls of the pressure chambers 2 and 3 are closed spaces 6, into each of which an inlet 9 and an outlet 8 opens. The inlet 9 and the outlet 8 can be the same channel.

The fastening of the end edges of the hoses 5 is gastight and 10 liquid-tight.

It can be seen in Figure 1 that the space 6 of the pressure chamber 3 has been filled by way of the inlet 9 with a gas or liquid under pressure, and that as a result of this the hose 5 is pinched in the chamber 3. A mixture of substances which was present in the hose of the 15 pressure chamber 3 will be driven out of said hose and forced through the intermediate piece 4 into the unpinched hose 5 of the pressure chamber 2. If the gas or liquid filling of the space 6 of the pressure chamber 3 is then discharged through the outlet 8 and the space 6 of the pressure chamber 2 is filled with gas or liquid through the inlet, the contents of 20 the hose 5 of the chamber 2 will flow back again to the hose 5 of the chamber 3. In this way the peristaltic movements of the stomach and the intestinal tract are simulated and good mixing and homogenization of the reactor contents can be produced. For purposes of filling the reactor, a supply pipe 10 opens out into the intermediate piece 4, while for the 25 discharge of materials mixed in the reactor use is made of the discharge pipe 11 extending from the intermediate piece 4. Alternatively, no intermediate piece is placed between the pressure chambers 2 and 3, and an end piece with supply means for the components to be mixed is fitted on the left end face of pressure chamber 2, while an end piece with 30 discharge means for mixed components is fitted on the right end face of pressure chamber 3.

A possible constructional embodiment of the reactor according to Figure 1 can be seen in Figure 2. Corresponding parts are provided with the same reference numbers.

35 The end edges of the hoses 5 are passed around flanged edge parts 12 of the casing of the chambers 2 and 3. For fixing of the two pressure chambers 2 and 3 to the intermediate piece 4, a ring 13 is placed in the annular gap next to each of the flanged edge parts 12, and fixing bolts 14 run through openings in said rings 13 and openings in

flanges 15 of the intermediate piece 4.

Closing pieces 16 with a pH electrode 17 extending through them are placed at the end faces of the chambers 2 and 3 facing away from each other. The closing pieces 16 are fixed to a ring 13 by means of bolts 14.

- 5 An intermediate piece 4 with pipes 10 and/or 11 can also be used as the end piece, in which case it is fitted instead of the closing pieces 16.

Figure 3 shows very diagrammatically three successive units 1a, 1b and 1c, forming an in vitro model for the stomach, the duodenum and the jejunum.

- 10 The discharge pipe 11 of the first unit 1a is integral with the supply pipe 10a of the second unit 1b, while the discharge pipe 11 of the second unit 1b is integral with the supply pipe 10a of the third unit 1c. Four valves 18, 19, 20 and 21 are shown, by means of which valves the supply and discharge of the substances can be accurately controlled. Each 15 of the units has one or more additional supply pipes 10b.

An exchange device 22, consisting of hollow membrane fibres, connects to the second unit 1b. Low-molecular gases and components can be exchanged by means thereof. Each of the units 1a, 1b, 1c is provided with a port 23 for taking samples. There is a possibility of placing the 20 membrane fibres in the centre of a pressure chamber.

- 25 Figure 4 is a diagram of an in vitro model of a peristaltic mixing reactor according to the invention.

The water bath to be heated electrically (for example, to 37°C) is indicated by 24. Warm water can be pumped by pumps 25 and 26 to the inlet of the pressure chambers 2 and 3, and can be fed back to the water bath 24 through the pipes 9. The pH control unit has the reference number 27, and the computer for controlling the whole system is indicated by 28. The computer control lines are indicated by dashed lines. Reference 30 number 29 is a tank for hydrochloric acid (HCl), and 30 is a tank for enzymes. Hydrochloric acid and enzymes can be pumped by means of the pump unit 31 through the pipes 32 and 33 to the intermediate piece 4. Food constituents are introduced through the normal supply inlet 10.

The reactor described can lead to excellent mixing and homogenization of the components with or without damage thereto.

- 35 The principle of the invention based on peristalsis can be applied in a peristaltic flap valve pump consisting of three or more chambers 2, 3. The supply of gas or liquid to and the discharge thereof from the closed spaces between a chamber wall and a hose are regulated by, for example, computer-controlled control means. Where three chambers

are coupled, in a first phase only the hose of the third chamber can be pinched, in a second phase the hoses of the first and third chamber can be pinched, in a third phase only the hose of the first chamber can be pinched, in a fourth phase the hoses of the first and second chamber can be pinched, and in a fifth phase the hoses of the three chambers can be pinched. In order to make it easy to control the liquid or gas pressure to the space between the chamber wall and the flexible hose in the case of a unit with various chambers placed after one another, and thus to control the peristaltic thrusting movements, use can be made of computer-controlled magnetic valves. It is possible to control not only the times of increasing and reducing the liquid or gas pressure, but also the volumes to be supplied, for example by metering the quantity with the aid of a piston which can be moved in a cylinder between adjustable stops. In Figure 3 the combination of a discharge pipe 11 and supply pipe 10 and a valve 19 could be replaced by a peristaltic flap valve pump according to the invention which is produced by coupling three chambers 2, 3.

What is essential for the invention of the reactor system according to the invention is that the open hoses are fitted in pressure chambers in which the space between the wall of a pressure chamber and the hose in question can be used not only for pinching said hose, but also for heating the constituents in the hose by means of a liquid or gas in the space. It is also important that coupling means should be present to permit coupling of the pressure chambers to each other and/or to end pieces or intermediate pieces, connection means being present in said end pieces or intermediate pieces, for the purpose of supplying constituents to the hoses and discharging constituents from them.

Claims

1. Reactor system, comprising:  
at least one unit (1) consisting of two or more pressure chambers (2, 3);  
in each of the pressure chambers a hose (5) made of flexible material and  
5 open at both ends, which hoses are fixed with their ends sealed in such a  
way that the spaces (6) between the wall of the pressure chambers and the  
hoses are closed;  
connection means (8, 9) for supplying a gas or liquid to and discharging  
it from the spaces (6) between the wall of the pressure chambers and the  
10 hoses;  
coupling means for coupling the pressure chambers to each other and/or to  
end pieces or intermediate pieces (4);  
connection means (10, 11) in the end pieces or intermediate pieces for  
supplying constituents to and discharging them from the hoses.
- 15 2. Reactor system according to Claim 1, characterized by control  
means (25, 26, 28) for controlled raising and lowering of the pressure in  
the closed spaces between the wall of a pressure chamber (2, 3) and a  
hose (5).
- 20 3. Reactor system according to Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that  
a thickened or flanged edge (12) is provided near both ends of each  
pressure chamber (2, 3), and in that for fixing an intermediate or end  
piece (4) to a pressure chamber or for directly fixing the pressure  
chambers to each other, a ring (13) is placed next to each thickened part  
or flanged edge (12), which ring is provided with an opening for the  
25 passage of a bolt, which can also be inserted through an opening in a  
flange (15) of an intermediate or end piece (4) or through an opening in  
a ring (13) of the next pressure chamber.
4. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims,  
characterized in that in successive units (1) a discharge pipe (11) for  
30 constituents of the first unit can be connected to a supply pipe (10) for  
constituents of a second unit, and in that computer-controlled valves  
(18, 19, 20, 21) are fitted in the combined discharge and supply pipes  
(10, 11).
- 35 5. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims,  
characterized in that the flexible hoses (5) are made of silicone rubber.
6. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims,  
characterized in that the flexible hoses (5) of at least one unit (1) are  
made of semi-permeable material.

7. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in that at least one unit is provided with a port (23) for taking samples.
8. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims, 5 characterized in that at least one unit is connected to a device (22) for the exchange of low-molecular components, which device is in particular provided with hollow membrane fibres.
9. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims, characterized by means for heating the liquid or gaseous medium which can 10 be conveyed to the spaces between the wall of the pressure chambers and the hoses.
10. Reactor system according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a flexible tube or a set of fibre membranes is provided at least in the centre of one of the pressure chambers inside 15 the hose.
11. Peristaltic flap valve pump, comprising three or more pressure chambers, each with a flexible hose fixed therein in such a way that the space between the wall of the pressure chamber and the hose is closed and the hoses are connected to each other, inlet and outlet means for a gas 20 or liquid opening out into each of the closed spaces between a chamber wall and a hose, and control means for controlling the supply of gas or liquid to and the discharge thereof from the closed spaces between a pressure chamber wall and a hose.

Fig -1

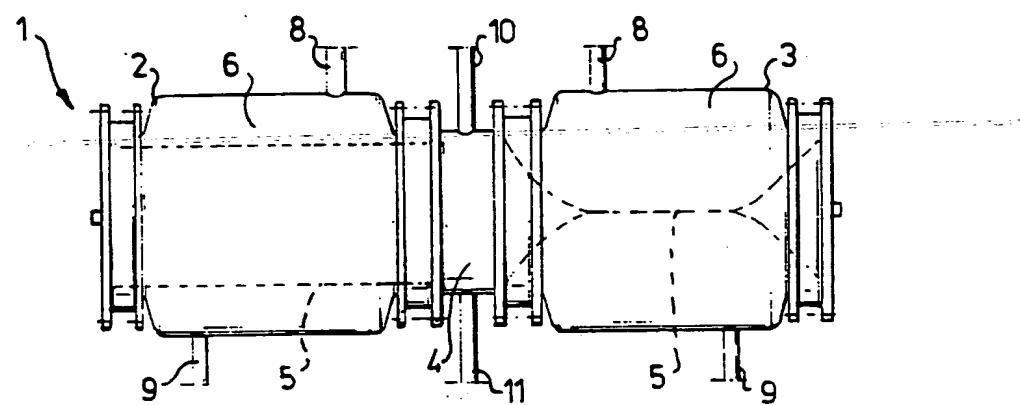


Fig -2

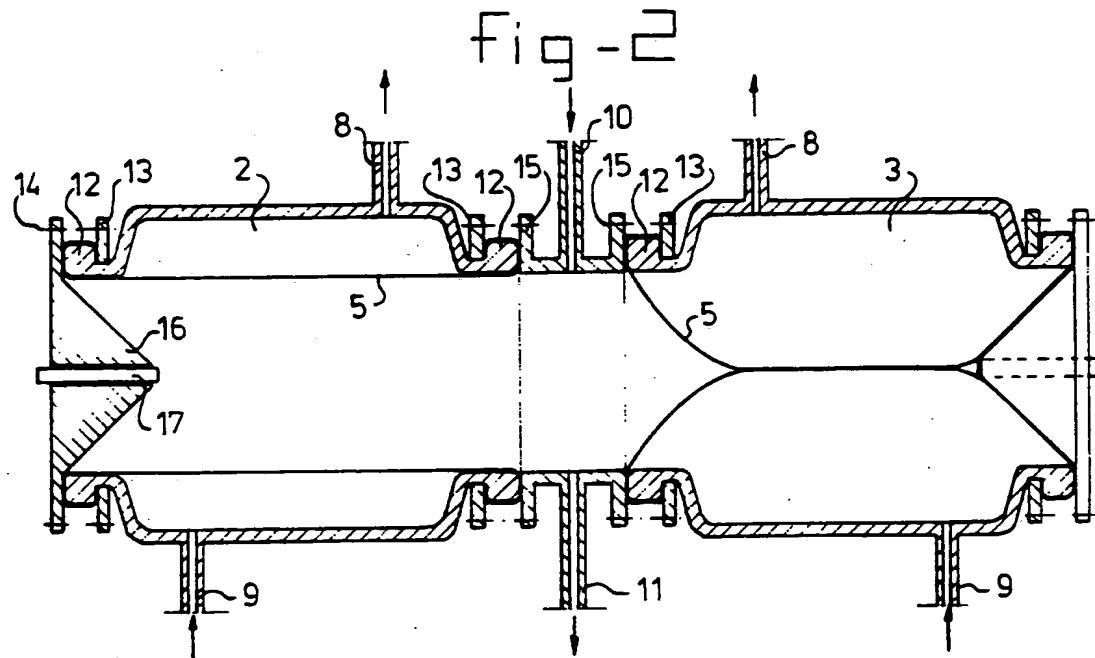
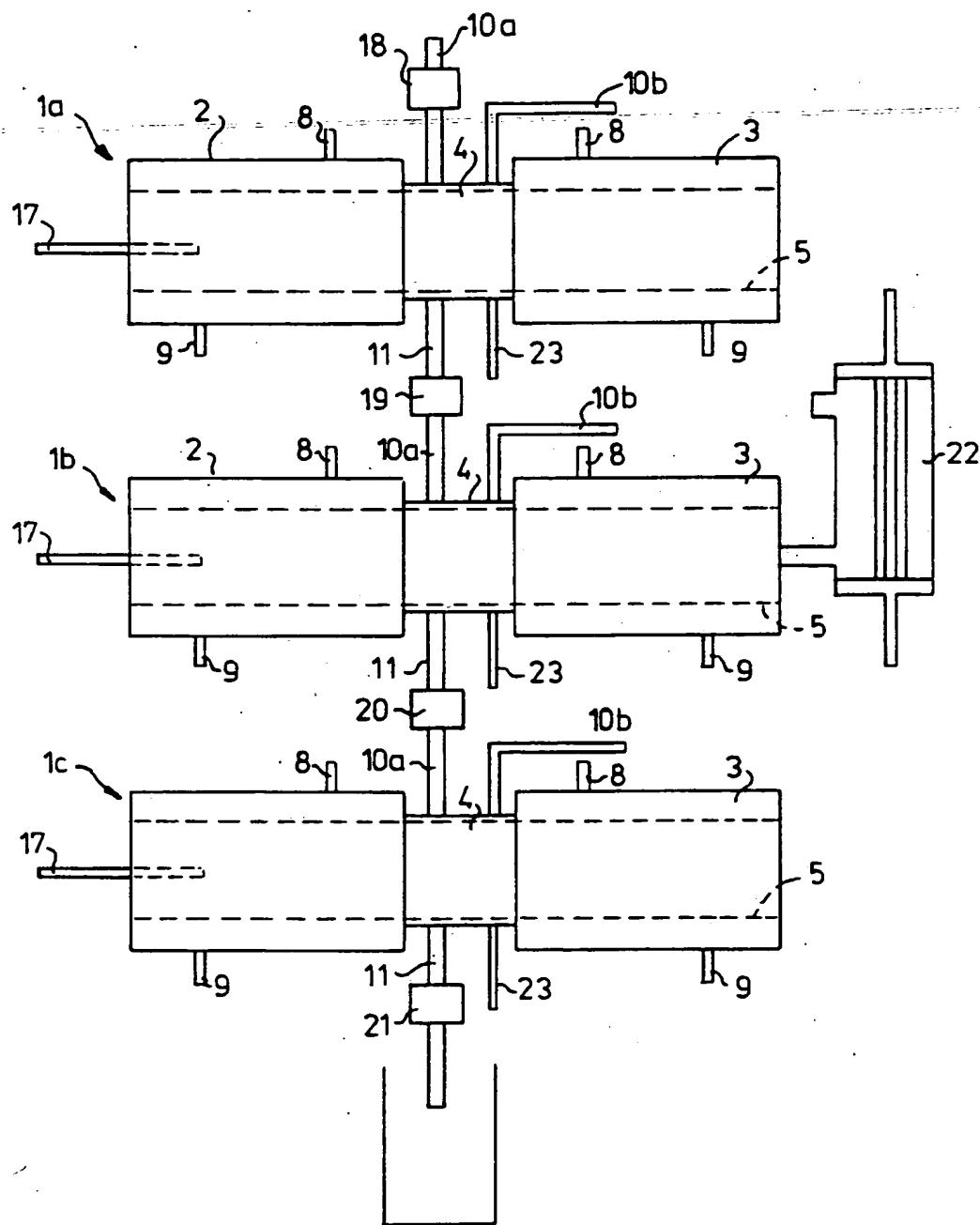
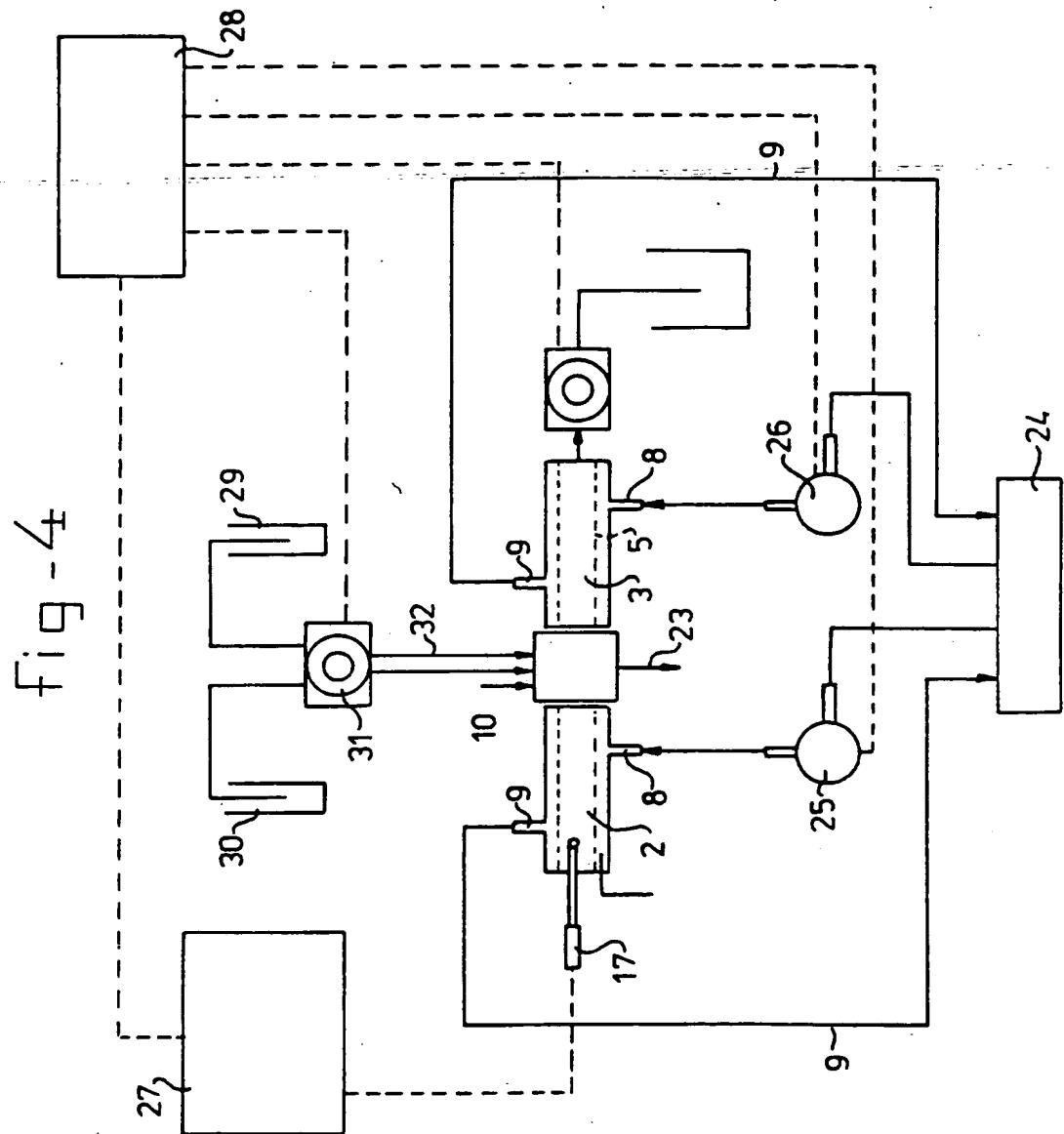


fig - 3





## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
IPC 5 B01F11/00

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## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

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Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

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## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 4, no. 144 (C-27)(626) 11 October 1980 & JP,A,55 092 127 (BABCOCK) 12 July 1980 cited in the application see abstract ---	1-11
A	GB,A,597 214 (POLAROID) 21 January 1948 ---	1-11
A	DE,A,40 42 298 (SCHREIBER) 2 July 1992 ---	
A	FR,A,2 158 118 (GERIN) 15 June 1973 ---	
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A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 12, no. 198 (C-502)(3045) 8 June 1988 & JP,A,62 198 433 (TDK CORP) 25 December 1987 see abstract ---	
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 11, no. 332 (C-455)(2779) 29 October 1987 & JP,A,62 117 621 (DENKI) 29 May 1985 see abstract -----	

**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**

Information on patent family members

International Application No

**PCT/NL 93/00225**

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
GB-A-597214°		NONE	
DE-A-4042298	02-07-92	NONE	
FR-A-2158118	15-06-73	NONE	
FR-A-2152452	27-04-73	NONE	

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